

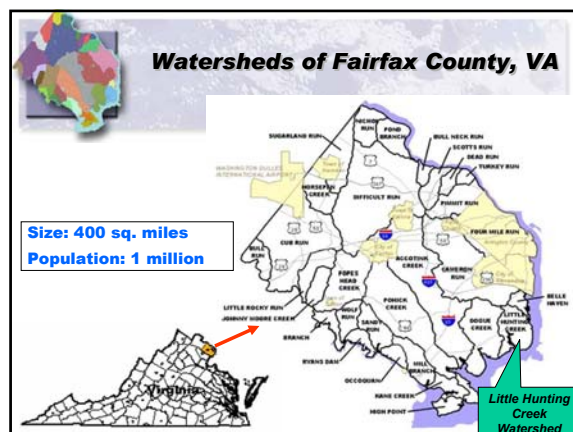
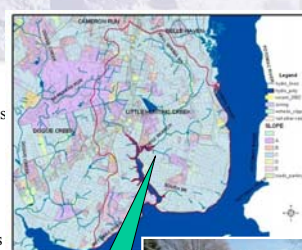


# Case Study #1: The Little Hunting Creek Watershed Management Plan

Fairfax County, Virginia  
April 21, 2004


## Little Hunting Creek History & Land-use



- Home of George Washington – Mount Vernon Plantations, 1700s
- 82% developed, 25% existing imperviousness:
  - 48% residential
  - 18% commercial/industrial
  - 27% Green space & wetlands
  - 7% roads & other pavements
- Future imperviousness ~ 27%

Watershed Area = 11 sq. mi.


## Why Little Hunting Creek (LHC) was chosen and challenges



Siltation reduces navigability

- Its the pilot watershed plan for the collaborative watershed approach.
- LHC has very active civic associations
- An older urbanized community with limited stormwater controls
- LHC is a partly tidal - coastal plain, slow moving and low gradient

## Why use a collaborative approach in developing watershed plan?



Little Hunting Creek Steering Committee prepares for a watershed tour

- Traditional approach to implementing capital projects had marginal success in Fairfax.
- Saw need to engage community through a partnership rather than "inform and defend" plan later.
- Residents, businesses and decision makers can pinpoint critical local problems.
- The plan involved choices – the community needs to help chose workable and effective solutions.
- Basic Premise – "it's the plan for the community by the community"

## Public Involvement Process




- Watershed Advisory Groups
- 4 Major Public Meetings for Each Watershed Plan
- Development of Goals and Objectives
- Plan Recommendations & Prioritization
- Implementation of Each Plan
- Long-term Community Stewardship



## The Advisory Group/Steering Committee Seeks Diversity

- ◆ **Citizen Groups** - civic associations, homeowner associations, garden clubs, and civic clubs.
- ◆ **Businesses** - realtors, garden centers, developers, home builders, and chambers of commerce.
- ◆ **Large Landowners** - historical sites (such as Mount Vernon), national parks, regional parks, county parks, universities, country clubs, schools, and airports.
- ◆ **Conservation/Environmental Groups** - "friends of..." groups, land trusts, politically appointed environmental committee members, and naturalist societies.
- ◆ **Stream "Users"** - canoe clubs, trail groups, and fishing organizations.
- ◆ **Municipalities** - watershed managers for adjacent jurisdictions located in the watershed.
- ◆ **Community Leaders** - elected officials' staff, individual leaders, and additional persons designated by elected officials



## How we got the community out

- ◆ Started with a contacts database - included key stakeholders who have been involved in prior efforts
- ◆ Used recommendations by elected official's (Supervisor) office - included current HOA representatives
- ◆ Initial Steering Committee members recommended others
- ◆ **Media:** press releases, mailed flyers, posters at public venues throughout community, word-a-mouth by Steering Committee, conducted watershed media tour, telephone calls and emails
  - It is recommended that a combination of several methods be used, results will be different for localities and watersheds
  - Participation been reliable and steady by LHC Steering Committee.



## The Vision, Initial Goals & Objectives identified by the community

**The Vision:** "is to integrate environmental management, natural resource protection, and community goals to minimize runoff and pollution to restore the quality of Little Hunting Creek and benefit the community"



- ◆ Protection of surface & ground water
- ◆ Reduction of streambank erosion
- ◆ Restoration of fish and wildlife habitat
- ◆ Reduction of house and yard flooding
- ◆ To support Virginia's commitment under the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement
- ◆ To meet current and future state and federal water quality standards



## Anticipated Outcomes of Watershed Plan

- ◆ Decreased volume and intensity of runoff with controls closer to the source
- ◆ Improved water quality in streams
- ◆ Expanded recreational opportunities
- ◆ Enhanced aesthetics in watershed
- ◆ Reduction in flooding
- ◆ Reduction of pave areas & increased structural controls – with retrofits & land-use changes



## Difficult Challenges Faced

- ◆ Getting the business community to the table - held special developer/industry forum
- ◆ Overcoming perceptions of "for select members only" for the composition of steering committee – allowed group to self select reps, changed name to "Advisory Group"
- ◆ Overcoming perceptions of "business as usual" by the Government – the depth of engagement and process helped
- ◆ Getting the right diversity of representatives and consistent attendance – a constant struggle



## Some Lessons Learned

- ◆ Skilled facilitation is a must
- ◆ Meeting locations are important – move around in watershed
- ◆ Casting a wide net for potential participants on steering committee – using non-traditional recruiting means
- ◆ Avoid summer vacations and holidays for meetings
- ◆ Things we would do differently:
  - Increase outreach to ethnical diverse groups
  - Improve communications with Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors and sooner



### **Why this worked for Fairfax County**

- ◆ Capital Projects will have a better chance for implementation – minimizing NIMBYs
- ◆ Community helped us focus on areas that might have been overlooked before and validated some of our initial assessments
- ◆ Steering Committee was instrumental in drumming-up attendance and support from constituency groups



### **How does a Collaborative Watershed Effort help?**

- ◆ It takes advantage of the ongoing efforts of community watershed advocates - capitalized on a very knowledgeable citizenry
- ◆ Helps the government better understand community needs and target solutions
- ◆ Fosters an atmosphere of partnership between community and government, instilling increased trust
- ◆ It is essential for achieving meaningful prioritization and understanding of funding needs



### **How does a Collaborative Watershed Effort help?**

- ◆ It is key to gaining public support for watershed programs – in fact, it could be said, “no fans, no plans.”
- ◆ Helps increase community awareness, better understanding of environmental issues, and encourages “environmental stewardship” – consistent with one of Fairfax County’s Strategic Plan Vision Element.

